

Remarks at a State Dinner Hosted by President Eduardo Frei of Chile in
Santiago
April 16, 1998

Mr. President, Mrs. Frei, members of the Chilean Government, citizens of this great nation: On behalf of my wife, our administration, the Members of Congress and our entire party, I thank you for the warm welcome we have received. And I understand that I should thank you in advance for your patience because the great gathering of this coming week will probably create the biggest taco in your history. [Laughter] For those in our delegation who don't know, that means "traffic jam."

Mr. President, it was just over a year ago that Hillary and I hosted you and Martita for a state visit in Washington. On that trip you delivered a powerful address to a joint session of our Congress. Now I will have the opportunity and the honor of addressing your Parliament tomorrow.

The short time between our visits reflects the growing strength and the growing importance of our relations. Chile is admired in the United States and around the world for its natural beauty, its writers and artists, its athletes, its leadership in seeking peace in volatile regions, its remarkable economic growth and stability, and the bravery of your people in restoring longstanding democracy after two turbulent decades.

That Chile is host to the second Summit of the Americas shows the esteem in which your country is held in this hemisphere. It also demonstrates, Mr. President, the great respect you have earned among your fellow leaders who are proud to be coming here for this meeting.

Some see you, Mr. President, as a man of calm reserve; a civil engineer who, as you just said, expertly builds bridges to improve the lives of your fellow citizens. But it seems to me there may be another side to you. It is said that you love opera and the tango—hardly the stuff of dry engineering. [Laughter] And when you addressed our Congress last year, the first person you quoted was not some gray-suited economist but that great political leader Don Quixote de la Mancha. The words of the noble Don you selected go to the core of our shared values, so let me repeat them tonight: "Freedom is one of the most precious gifts Heaven bestows

on man. All the treasure of Earth cannot equal it."

Mr. President, we have seen that like your father before you, you care passionately about the freedom of your people and about the least fortunate in your society. I'm sure your father was in your thoughts when, in your very first address as Chile's President, you pledged to bring hope and dignity to the poorest of your fellow citizens. You've worked hard to ensure that your growing prosperity will benefit not just the few but everyone. And Mrs. Frei deserves great credit for her active work on behalf of the poor, women and children, and Chilean artisans.

The United States wants to deepen our partnership with Chile across the whole range of challenges and opportunities we share, strengthening democracy, improving education, protecting the environment, preserving the peace, and yes, expanding trade. Our meeting today furthered all these goals. I know we will continue to do the same. So much is at stake. Working with the Chilean people and with you, Mr. President, is a great honor for me, my Government, and our citizens.

In the darkest days of the past year, when dissent was suppressed, when people were denied a meaningful vote and true leaders denied the chance to lead, the Chilean people never abandoned hope that one day things would get better. Now, because of your hope, the courage, the vision of your leadership, and your people, things are, indeed, better—much better. Better in a way that is a beacon of hope to people throughout this hemisphere, and, indeed—perhaps more than you know—throughout the world.

Now the United States and Chile celebrate together the precious gifts of freedom and prosperity, and our determination to support democracy and to advance prosperity all across the Americas and throughout the world.

For all that you have done and the reception we have received, and for all that we must do together for tomorrow, I am honored to invite all of you to join me in a toast to the President, the First Lady, and the people of Chile.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:20 p.m. in La Moneda Palace. In his remarks, he referred to President Frei's wife, Marta.

Remarks to the National Congress of Chile in Valparaiso *April 17, 1998*

Thank you very much. To the President of the Senate, the President of the Chamber of Deputies, to the members of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies, members of the Chilean Cabinet, members of the diplomatic corps, my fellow Americans, including members of our administration, Members of Congress, the Governor of Puerto Rico, ladies and gentlemen. First, let me thank you for the warm reception that Hillary and I, the Secretary of State, Secretary of Education, and our entire delegation has received not only here but by the people of Chile.

We are honored to be in this great nation, a place of marvelous gifts and well-earned accomplishments. Visitors here marvel at the beauty and extraordinary contrast of your landscape, from the desert north to the towering ranges of the Andes, to the mysteries of Easter Island, to the southern beaches where penguins brave Antarctic winds.

Your culture moves the world in poetry and prose and music and dance, in theater and films, haunted by the spirits of the past, enriched by dreams of the future. Your Nobel Prize-winning poets, Gabriela Mistral and Pablo Neruda, have moved readers everywhere. Neruda's words and rhythms still come alive on every continent; his echo still heard in internationally acclaimed Chilean works like the novels of José Donoso and Antonio Skarmeta.

Your economic success is admired the world over. Indeed, more and more other nations, whether developed or developing, want to be able to learn from your example. But over and above all those gifts and achievements, Chile possesses something older than the achievements, and perhaps even more valuable than nature's gifts—your devotion to freedom and democracy, a long and proud tradition.

Not so very long ago now, freedom-loving people everywhere in the world cheered and cheered when the people of Chile bravely re-

claimed their democratic heritage. Our hemisphere's longing for democracy goes all the way back to George Washington and Simon Bolívar. Today, we work to claim its full blessings, for a strong democracy honors all its people, respecting their dignity and fundamental rights, giving them the responsibility to govern, demanding that they tolerate each other's differences in an honorable fashion. It honors its children, giving all of them the opportunity to learn so that they can live their dreams. It honors its poor, its ill, its elderly, offering them support, leaving no one without hope. It honors entrepreneurs with efficient and honest government, offering the chance to create prosperity. It honors its writers, its artists, and its press, ensuring freedom of expression, no matter, and perhaps especially, when it is painful to hear. It honors its soldiers for their commitment to defend the people, not to rule them. This principle was strongly championed by Diego Portales early in Chile's history.

Democracy is never perfect, but because it is open and free, it is always perfectible. In the words of our President Franklin Roosevelt, who tried so hard to be a good neighbor to Latin America, democracy is a never-ending seeking for better things.

At different points in this century, many nations of the Americas lost their democracy. Some of them lost it more than once. No one loves freedom more than those who have had it and lost it. No one prizes it more than those who have lost it and regained it. I know, here, I am in a room full of people who love freedom.

Freedom's victory now has been won throughout the Americas. With a single exception, the day of the dictators is over. The 21st century will be a century of democracy. To those anywhere in the Americas who would seek to take away people's precious liberties once again, or rule through violence and terror once again, let